



Fact Sheet

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The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation

Women's median earnings are lower than men's in nearly all occupations, whether they work in occupations predominantly done by women, occupations predominantly done by men, or occupations with a more even mix of men and women. During 2011, median weekly earnings for female full-time workers were \$684, compared with \$832 per week for men, a gender wage ratio of 82.2 percent (Table 1; a gender wage gap of 17.8 percent).¹ Added to the gender wage gap within occupations is the gender wage gap between occupations. Male-dominated occupations tend to pay more than female-dominated occupations at similar skill levels, particularly at higher levels of educational attainment.² Tackling occupational segregation is an important part of tackling the gender wage gap.

The gender wage gap and occupational segregation—men primarily working in occupations done by men, and women primarily working with other women—are persistent features of the U.S. labor market. Only four of the 20 most common occupations for men and the 20 most common occupations for women overlap. Four of ten women (39.5 percent) work in traditionally female occupations and between four and five of ten male workers (44.5 percent) work in traditionally male occupations; only 5.8 percent of women work in traditionally male occupations and only 4.6 percent of men in traditionally female occupations.³

Women Earn Less Than Men in (Almost) All of the Most Common Occupations for Women

Table 1 shows the median weekly earnings and the gender wage gap in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working women. The three largest occupations, 'secretaries and administrative assistants', 'elementary and middle school teachers,' and 'registered nurses' together employ more than thirteen percent of all women. More than 40 percent of full-time female employees worked in only 20 occupations, but only 15 percent of full-time male employees work in these occupations. Nine of these occupations are female sex-typed, meaning at least three of four workers are women. One occupation, 'teachers' assistants,' employs too few men to estimate the gender wage gap.

Within women's 20 most common occupations, median full-time weekly earnings for women range from \$1,034 per week for 'registered nurses' to \$373 per week for 'cashiers' (Table 1). With one exception, 'bookkeeping, accounting and auditing clerks,' women earn less than men (these calculations include full-time workers only). The gender wage gap among the 20 most common female occupations is largest for 'financial managers,' with a gender median earnings ratio of 66 percent, men's median earnings are more than \$500 per week than women's.⁴

Table 1: The Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Women (Full-Time Workers Only), 2011

	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Men's median weekly earnings	Share of female workers in occupation	Number of male workers	Number of female workers
All full-time workers, all occupations	\$684	82.2%	\$832	44.3%	55,971,000	44,486,000
20 most common occupations for women					Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Secretaries and administrative assistants	\$651	86.0%	\$757	96.1%	0.2%	4.6%
Elementary and middle school teachers	\$933	91.3%	\$1,022	81.0%	0.8%	4.4%
Registered nurses	\$1,034	95.7%	\$1,081	90.3%	0.4%	4.4%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	\$446	88.8%	\$502	86.9%	0.3%	2.6%
Customer service representatives	\$569	90.6%	\$628	64.4%	1.0%	2.2%
Cashiers	\$373	90.8%	\$411	71.6%	0.7%	2.2%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$599	78.9%	\$759	43.1%	2.3%	2.2%
First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative workers	\$741	89.0%	\$833	67.2%	0.8%	1.9%
Accountants and auditors	\$956	76.5%	\$1,250	61.6%	1.0%	1.9%
Receptionists and information clerks	\$520	99.8%	\$521	91.0%	0.1%	1.8%
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	\$656	100.3%	\$654	87.0%	0.2%	1.7%
Managers, all other	\$1,047	74.5%	\$1,406	36.0%	2.3%	1.7%
Retail salespersons	\$466	75.2%	\$620	41.0%	1.9%	1.7%
Office clerks, general	\$594	83.4%	\$712	84.8%	0.2%	1.5%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	\$392	82.9%	\$473	85.0%	0.2%	1.4%
Secondary school teachers	\$989	94.3%	\$1,049	57.2%	0.8%	1.3%
Financial managers	\$991	65.9%	\$1,504	54.3%	0.9%	1.3%
Teacher assistants	\$471	-	-	-	0.1%	1.3%
Waiters and waitresses	\$389	83.5%	\$466	64.1%	0.6%	1.3%
Social workers	\$798	88.5%	\$902	81.0%	0.2%	1.3%
<i>Percent of all women and men:</i>					<i>14.7%</i>	<i>42.4%</i>

Note: * Earnings data are published only for occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011.

"Household Data, Annual Averages. Table 39." <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>> (retrieved April 2012).

Women Earn Less Than Men in (Almost) All of the Most Common Occupations for Men

Table 2 shows the median earnings and the gender wage gap in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working men. These occupations employ three out of ten male and one in seven female full-time workers; twelve of the occupations are non-traditional for women, and in five of the 20, 'automotive service technicians and mechanics,' carpenters,' 'construction laborers,' 'electricians,' and 'grounds maintenance workers,' there are too few women workers to estimate median weekly earnings for women.

Table 2: The Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Men (Full-Time Workers Only), 2011

	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of female workers in occupation (percent)	Number of male workers	Number of female workers
All workers	\$832	\$684	82.2%	44.3%	55,971,000	44,486,000
20 most common occupations for men					Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	\$712	\$511	71.8%	4.2%	4.2%	0.2%
Managers, all other	\$1,406	\$1,047	74.5%	36.0%	2.3%	1.7%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$759	\$599	78.9%	43.1%	2.3%	2.2%
Janitors and building cleaners	\$514	\$418	81.3%	25.7%	2.0%	0.9%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	\$520	\$416	80.0%	13.9%	1.9%	0.4%
Retail salespersons	\$620	\$466	75.2%	41.0%	1.9%	1.6%
Construction laborers	\$587	-	-	1.7%	1.5%	0.0%
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	\$1,019	\$927	91.0%	24.0%	1.5%	0.6%
Software developers, applications and systems software	\$1,606	\$1,388	86.4%	18.1%	1.5%	0.4%
Cooks	\$406	\$363	89.4%	37.1%	1.4%	1.0%
Chief executives	\$2,122	\$1,464	69.0%	24.7%	1.3%	0.6%
Grounds maintenance workers	\$424	-	-	3.8%	1.3%	0.1%
Carpenters	\$630	-	-	1.4%	1.3%	0.0%
Stock clerks and order fillers	\$488	\$501	102.7%	34.0%	1.2%	0.8%
General and operations managers	\$1,319	\$972	73.7%	29.3%	1.2%	0.6%
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	\$718	-	-	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%
Security guards and gaming surveillance officers	\$544	\$474	87.1%	20.1%	1.1%	0.4%
Police and sheriff's patrol officers	\$948	\$938	98.9%	11.5%	1.0%	0.2%
Electricians	\$855	-	-	0.6%	1.0%	0.0%
Customer service representatives	\$628	\$569	90.6%	64.4%	1.0%	2.2%
<i>Percent of all women and men:</i>					31.9%	13.7%

Note: Earnings data are made available only where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011.

"Household Data, Annual Averages. Table 39." <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>> (retrieved April 2012).

Median full-time weekly earnings for men range from \$2,122 for 'chief executives' to \$406 for 'cooks' (Table 2). Five of the most common 20 occupations have weekly earnings above \$1,000, compared with only two of the most common occupations for women. With one exception, 'stock clerks and order fillers,' where women's weekly earnings (\$501) are 103 percent of those

of men, men earn more than women in the most common male occupations. Women have almost reached parity in the occupation of ‘police and sheriff’s patrol officers,’ where women earn \$938 per week, 99 percent of male earnings.

Women are More than Twice as Likely as Men to Work in Occupations with Poverty Wages

Three of the most common occupations for women, ‘cashiers,’ ‘waiters and waitresses,’ and ‘maids and household cleaners,’ and two of the most common occupations for men, ‘cooks’ and ‘grounds maintenance workers,’ have median earnings for a full week of work that provide less than 100 percent of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ federal poverty levels for a family of four.⁵ The poverty levels refer to annual earnings and translating them into weekly earnings assumes that a worker would be able to get full-time work for 52 weeks a year; this may not always be possible in these occupations (which are characterized by considerable fluctuations in demand for labor and, hence, unstable earning opportunities).

A further seven of the most common female and eight of the most common male occupations provide median earnings of less than 150 percent of the poverty threshold, potentially placing the workers in these occupations among the working poor, with earnings that are often too high to qualify for public supports but too low to attain economic security. These include occupations such as ‘teacher assistants’ and ‘nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides.’

Low earnings are a significant problem for both male and female workers. Yet overall more than twice as many women (5.52 million) than men (2.3 million) work in occupations with median earnings for full-time work below the federal poverty threshold for a family of four.⁶

The Occupational Gender Wage Gap by Race and Ethnicity

The gender wage gap differs by race and ethnic background. Hispanic/Latina women have the lowest median earnings, at \$518 per week, 55 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men; black women have median weekly earnings of \$595, 64 percent of median weekly earnings of white men. Asians have the highest median weekly earnings, for both men and women, and the highest levels of educational attainment. The wage gaps for Asian women compared with Asian men and white women compared with white men are larger than the wage gap for the whole population; the wage gaps between black female and male workers and Latino male and female workers are smaller. More detailed information is available in IWPR’s fact sheet, *The Gender Wage Gap: 2011*.⁷

Table 3 provides median weekly earnings for full-time work by race and ethnicity in seven intermediate occupational groups; the sample size in the Current Population Survey is not sufficient to provide reliable earnings estimates at a more detailed occupational level. The distribution of women across the occupations varies for each group. At least a quarter of white, black, and Asian women are working in ‘professional and related’ occupations, compared with under a fifth of Hispanic women; black and Hispanic women are more than twice as likely to work in service occupations than white women; Asian women are considerably less likely than other women to work in ‘office and administrative support’ occupations, and Hispanic women

are most likely to work in ‘production, transportation and material moving’ occupations (Table 3).

With one exception (black women’s earnings are 102 percent of black men’s earnings in ‘office and administrative support’) in each of the major occupational groupings men earn more than women of the same race or ethnicity (Table 3). The gender earnings gap is magnified by a race and ethnic earnings gap: Hispanic women in management, business and finance, for example, earn only 83 percent of Hispanic men in these occupations, while Hispanic men earn only 71 percent of white men’s earnings, and Hispanic women earn only 59 percent of white male managers. The median earnings of Hispanic women are lower than the federal poverty level s in three occupational groups, which collectively employ four out of ten (39.5) Hispanic women (Table 3).

Table 3: Median Weekly Earnings for Male and Female Workers, by Broad Occupational Classification and Race and Ethnic Background (Full-Time Workers Only), 2011

Female Workers	White Women (Non-Hispanic Only)		Black or African American Women*		Asian Women		Latina or Hispanic Women	
Occupation	Median weekly earnings (\$)	White women in occupation as % of all female white workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	Black women in occupation as % of all female black workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	Asian women in occupation as % of all female Asian workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	Latina women in occupation as % of all female Latina workers
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1,001	18.5%	\$889	12.8%	\$1,131	17.7%	\$847	10.5%
Professional and related occupations	\$939	32.4%	\$796	25.8%	\$1,115	30.8%	\$806	18.4%
Service occupations	\$450	11.9%	\$432	24.1%	\$480	18.2%	\$402	25.9%
Sales and related occupations	\$600	9.3%	\$442	8.3%	\$538	8.6%	\$437	9.4%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$625	22.8%	\$590	21.5%	\$694	15.9%	\$576	22.3%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$619	0.7%	\$552	0.6%	\$503	0.7%	\$379	2.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$533	4.4%	\$490	6.9%	\$461	8.1%	\$405	11.6%
Male Workers	White Men (Non-Hispanic Only)		Black or African American Men*		Asian Men		Latino or Hispanic Men	
Occupation	Median weekly earnings	White men in occupation as % of all male white workers	Median weekly earnings	Black men in occupation as % of all male black workers	Median weekly earnings	Asian men in occupation as % of all male Asian workers	Median weekly earnings	Latino men in occupation as % of all male Latino workers
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1,431	18.3%	\$1,044	9.7%	\$1,434	16.1%	\$1,026	7.2%
Professional and related occupations	\$1,245	20.9%	\$912	15.0%	\$1,403	35.5%	\$1,012	8.1%
Service occupations	\$632	10.4%	\$501	20.5%	\$535	13.5%	\$444	20.3%
Sales and related occupations	\$873	10.5%	\$603	7.5%	\$772	7.8%	\$619	6.6%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$712	6.2%	\$579	9.9%	\$741	6.6%	\$583	7.3%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$823	16.4%	\$663	11.5%	\$756	6.6%	\$533	26.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$713	17.4%	\$595	25.8%	\$584	13.9%	\$525	24.3%

Note: * Data for black or African Americans may include black Hispanics or Latinos.

Source: IWPR compilation of data based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Table A-2. Usual weekly earnings of employed full-time wage and salary workers by intermediate occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and Non-Hispanic ethnicity, Annual Average 2011.*

Notes

¹The weekly earnings data in this fact sheet are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) and refer to full-time (working 35 hours or more per week) wage and salary workers age 16 and older (excluding the self-employed); annual earnings data for 2011 (which include workers 15 years and older as well as the self-employed, with earnings for at least 50 weeks of the year) are not available until Fall 2012; the gender wage gap based on annual earnings was 23 percent in 2010, and the female/male earnings ratio was 77 percent.

² See Ariane Hegewisch, Hannah Liepmann, Jeffrey Hayes, and Heidi Hartmann, "Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap." *IWPR Briefing Paper*. Institute for Women's Policy Research: Washington, DC, 2010.; available at <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/separate-and-not-equal-gender-segregation-in-the-labor-market-and-the-gender-wage-gap>>

³The definition of traditional/non-traditional occupations as having at least 75 percent of the workers of one gender is provided in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 S.250-6. Calculation includes only occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers. Restricting the calculation to full-time workers only increases segregation: 41.3 percent of women and 52.3 percent of men work full-time in traditional occupations for their gender; and 7.8 percent of women and 4.9 percent of men work full-time in occupations non-traditional for their gender (IWPR compilation of data based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Table 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Average 2011*. <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>>). Effective with January 2011 data, occupations reflect the introduction of the 2010 Census Standard Occupational classification system into the CPS. Data for 2011 are not strictly comparable with earlier years.

⁴ Among all occupations, the gender wage gap is largest for women working full-time as 'property, real estate, and community association managers,' with a female/male earnings ratio of 60.6 percent, a gender wage gap of 39.4 percent (IWPR calculation based on same source as Table 1).

⁵ The federal poverty levels for a family of four in 2011 was \$22,350, or \$430 per week for 52 weeks. One-hundred fifty of the poverty level was \$33,525, or weekly earnings \$645; see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 'The 2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines', at <<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml>> (retrieved April 15, 2012)

⁶ IWPR calculation based on same source as Table 1.

⁷ The fact sheet is available at < <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2011>>.

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